

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website

Small Group Ministry

Beyond Resilience

First Parish Church of Stow and Acton, MA, November 2020

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting

“Someday, the universe will throw a wrench in the works and your well-oiled machine of a life will grind to a halt. And then it will keep going. Because after you got bored of crying and worrying, you took a deep breath and pushed it back into motion.” — *Nora McInerney Purmort*

Check-in/Sharing: This is the time to mention briefly any major issues or events on your mind that you would like to share.

Topic: Beyond Resilience

Good news: Research shows that everybody has resilience. We’re born with it. You are not “a resilient person” – or not -- through some quirk of fate. Our ability to bounce back can be encouraged or discouraged by the environments in which we’ve grown up and lived. But the seeds of resilience are right there inside us, and guess what? Tough times really DO make us stronger and better equipped to adapt to changes in circumstance.

There are dozens of rigorous studies that show that the more we’ve endured, the greater the possibility that we’ll emerge better able to address our needs in volatile environments.

We now know that “stressors, shocks, volatility, noise, mistakes, faults, attacks and failures” bestow the property of “antifragility.”

“Antifragility is beyond resilience or robustness. The resilient resists shocks and stays the same; the antifragile gets better,” writes Nassim Taleb, defining the idea of “antifragility” in a book that first mentioned the idea.

This applies to individuals as well as organizations. Expose a human being or a church community to tough times, and we don’t just survive, we change for the better, more able to thrive when tough times continue, or come along again.

Stress might turn us into gelatinous blobs for a short time, but we WILL eventually return to our own, recognizable form. Not exactly the same as we were. And quite likely, better for the experience.

“Persistence and resilience only come from having been given the chance to work through difficult problems.” — *Gever Tulley*

“Our greatest glory is not in never falling but in rising every time we fall.” – *Confucius*

“I can be changed by what happens to me. But I refuse to be reduced by it.” — *Maya Angelou*

"On the face of it, resilience is not a bad idea at all. That is, if all we want to do is return to our original shape. But what that definition of resilience ignores is a deep psychological need that is inherent in us for growth and self-actualization."-- *Clair Nana*

Possible Questions for Discussion:

- Have you ever emerged from tough times better prepared to deal with future challenges? If yes, do you know why? If no, do you know why not?
- When do you take time to mentally hit ‘pause’ and check in with yourself? Could you share any ways you work with your strengths to get a better outcome?
- What parts of your life protect you in crises? Are there areas where your choices have left you more vulnerable?
- Have any changes or struggles in your life affected your sense of identity or understanding of yourself? If so, what helped you regain/define your sense of self?
- Were there any people in your life that showed you how you can fail and then get up and try again? Have you helped teach or role model that for anyone else?
- Have you ever found or helped to create an environment that made it safe to respond emotionally in tough times, or easier to be resilient and effectively respond to challenges?

(Group will take a few minutes to consider topic and questions and then share).

Wrapping Up: How did you like this topic and session?

Closing Words

“Do not judge me by my success, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again.” - *Nelson Mandela*